

In the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A milking machine unit cylinder comprising:
 - a flexible element; and
 - at least one sensor element which detects a substantial weight on the flexible element to trigger a start signal for a milking process; and
 - a rapid ventilation valve-in communication with the sensor element.
2. (Previously Presented) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, wherein the sensor element emits a start signal as the weight on the flexible element exceeds a predetermined threshold value.
3. (Previously Presented) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 2, wherein the predetermined threshold value is variable.
4. (Previously Presented) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, wherein the predetermined threshold value is independent of an operating vacuum.
5. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, ~~wherein at least one~~ and further comprising:
 - a biasing element is provided disposed to move the rapid ventilation valve into a closed position.
6. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim [[4]]5, wherein the predetermined threshold value is influenced by the biasing element.
7. (Previously Presented) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, wherein the flexible element is coupled to a movable element.
8. (Previously Presented) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, wherein the flexible element is configured as a chain.

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9. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, wherein the flexible element is coupled to ~~the~~ a milking unit.
10. (Previously Presented) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, wherein at least one sensor element is selected from a group of sensors consisting of: load measuring means, proximity switches, magnetic limiting switches, dry reed contact switches, expansion measuring strips, magnetic, inductive, capacitive sensors and resistance sensors and combinations thereof.
11. (Previously Presented) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the sensor element is mounted within the cylinder.
12. (Previously Presented) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 1, wherein the sensor element is contactless.
13. (Currently Amended) A milking unit cylinder, ~~comprising:~~ according to claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ a rapid ventilation ~~membrane~~ valve comprises a closing element which is movable between an open position and a closed position.
14. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 13 1, wherein the rapid ventilation ~~membrane~~ valve defines a control port and ~~the milking unit cylinder further~~ ~~comprises:~~ an air controller.
15. (Canceled)
16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 13 14, wherein the rapid ventilation valve comprises:

a membrane for moving between a control port open position and a control port closing position; and and further comprising
a biasing means that biases the rapid ventilation membrane toward the control
port closed position.
18. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 13 17, wherein the rapid ventilation membrane in the control port open position permits air to flow from
defines a rapid ventilation aperture for communicating air and moving the rapid ventilation
membrane to a ventilation position into the milking unit cylinder.
19. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 13 17, wherein the rapid ventilation membrane is disposed in the milking unit cylinder to define an interior
space; and the milking unit cylinder further comprises a piston mounted in the interior
space.
20. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 19, and further
comprising a membrane control port mounted on the side of the rapid ventilation
membrane that is opposite the piston.
21. (Currently Amended) The milking unit cylinder according to claim 20, wherein the rapid
ventilation membrane can be placed in a ventilation position by applying atmospheric
pressure in the interior space and by applying subpressure to the membrane control port.
22. (Canceled)
23. (Canceled)

24. (Currently Amended) A method for automatically starting a milking process comprising the steps of:

holding a milking unit at a first position;

triggering a start signal; and

rapidly ventilating a milking unit cylinder.

25. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 24 and further comprising the step of lifting a the milking unit to a second position to trigger a start signal.

26. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 24 wherein the step of:

rapidly ventilating the milking unit cylinder comprises the step of:

ventilating gas through a plurality of ventilation apertures.

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)